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SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: PERCEPTIONS AND ELECTION PROSPECTS OF
THE PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP IN SALAH AD DIN

Classified By: PRT Leader Stephanie Miley, for reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY. Recent Coalition Forces (CF) polling in Salah ad Din's (SAD) major cities revealed that the SaD Governor is seen as incapable and indecisive; the Deputy Governor, effective but dictatorial; and Provincial Council (PC) members, corrupt and self-serving. The Governor and Deputy Governor positions are indirectly elected through the PC, so the top provincial positions will go to those who are able to build the greatest consensus among the PC members. In the next elections, the PC will likely see a large turnover, with Sunni plans to participate, and many of the new members may come from Qada and Nahia councils. If the Governor and Deputy Governor are able to hang on to their PC seats, they will have many new challengers for their current positions. END SUMMARY.

Incapable and Indecisive Governor

13. (C) Polling comments from across the province indicated that Governor Hamad Hamoud al Shakti is seen as "incapable of fulfilling his job responsibilities" and "too disorganized to deliver services, like fuel, electricity, and water." While some individuals see Governor Hamad as a good interlocutor with the Coalition Forces (CF) and passable at resolving small problems, most see him as "powerless and without influence" and second in command to the Deputy Governor. Formerly a school teacher, the Governor is considered corrupt for his recent gains in wealth and property, especially for the rumored construction of a new hospital in Jordan in honor of his second wife. (NOTE: His second wife, Dr. Amira, the head surgeon of the maternity ward at the Tikrit Teaching Hospital, was assassinated in July 2006. END NOTE.)

Governor: Comment and Re-election Prospects

14. (C) Since the July 2006 assassination of the Governor's second wife, he has made more efforts to reach out to the province. He has visited many of the cities in the province, and traveled to Balad in an effort to settle the community after the October clash in sectarian violence.

15. (C) Although the Governor is growing into his role as the head of the provincial government, he is still largely seen as incapable and ineffective with administrative affairs. He may be able to re-gain a seat in the Provincial Council (PC), but it is unlikely that he will be able to garner enough support in the PC to be re-elected as Governor.

Effective, but Dictatorial Deputy Governor

¶16. (C) According to the polling, Deputy Governor (General) Abdullah Ejbarah is very well respected, educated, and decisive. He is seen as a good administrator and believed to have control of the provincial government, rather than the Governor, through his tribal and former military connections. He is seen to make all the real decisions and "runs the provincial government." Most SaD residents also perceive him as working closely with the CF. Many believe he has become rich in his current position through kickbacks from contractors who implement reconstruction projects. He is also seen to favor his tribe, al Jabouri, whose members he helps with employment and CF detainment issues.

Deputy Governor: Comment and Re-Election Prospects

¶17. (C) A former Brigadier General in the Iraqi Army, well connected throughout the province, and a decent English speaker, he is the CF's primary interlocutor in the provincial government. He was reportedly a level four Baath Party member, and is therefore only able to hold his position under the current debaathification regulations because he obtained a waiver. Many SaD residents believe his relationship with the CF enabled him to receive it. He recently told us that he had received a letter from the central government stating that he was to be removed from office due to his Baath connections, but we have no other information on that.

¶18. (C) General Abdullah clearly has designs on becoming SaD's
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next governor. While likely to be elected to the PC, his dictatorial style and perceived involvement in corruption may prevent him from obtaining the province's top seat. In addition, he may still have to overcome issues with debaathification regulations.

Corrupt and Self-Serving Provincial Council

¶19. (C) Most SaD residents see the members of the Provincial Council (PC) as "unwanted, self-serving, and unconcerned with the citizens needs," according to polling results. PC members are generally seen as thieves who have become wealthy through short-changing reconstruction projects and making inside deals. Some residents have also questioned the role of the PC in the provincial government.

PC: Comment and Re-election Prospects

¶10. (C) The PC, as a result of the Sunni boycott of the previous elections, is not representative or respected in the province. It is likely that most of the PC's current members will not be re-elected because of the change in voter demographics (as we believe the Sunnis will participate in the next elections) and because of the general poor perception of the PC members and their ability to run local government. Current Qada and Nahia council members will like successfully contend for PC seats.

Comment

¶11. (C) Far from scientific, these polling opinions are gathered by CF-trained Iraqis who give their perceptions of opinions in their communities. Their opinions, however,

match those we routinely hear from other contacts. Possibly because of the prospect of elections looming, both the Governor and PC have recently become more functional in their roles. Although the Governor is making great efforts to visit communities throughout the province and the PC has recently passed internal rules and procedures that will make its operations more democratic, it may be too little too late to salvage their reputations and re-election prospects. The Deputy Governor, with his good administrator reputation and well-established connections, is best poised to find a place in the provincial government leadership after the next elections. END COMMENT.

¶12. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:
<http://blogs.csp.sgov.gov/blojsom/blog/salahaddin/>.

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